



**A HEAD START
HANDBOOK OF THE
PARENT INVOLVEMENT
VISION AND STRATEGIES**



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Head Start Bureau

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A Head Start Handbook of the Parent Involvement Vision and Strategies



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Table of Contents

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INTRODUCTION	vii
THE HEAD START VISION FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT	ix
PART I: A Statement of Vision, Values, and Opportunities for Partnering With Parents in Head Start	1
A. Planning and Preparation for Entry Into Head Start	3
Program Development and Management	3
Recruitment and Enrollment	4
Orientation	5
Family Goal-Setting and Planning	5
B. Participation in Head Start	7
Parents as Educators, Caregivers, and Nurturers of Their Children	9
Parents' Personal Development	10
Support for Parents as Partners in Decision-Making for Themselves, Their Families, and Their Program	11
C. Transitioning from Head Start	13
PART II: Parent Involvement Strategies	17
A. Planning and Preparation for Entry into Head Start	19
Strategies to Enhance Parent Involvement Through Program Development and Management Initiatives	19
Strategies to Maximize Each Parent's Opportunity for Involvement	25
Recruitment and Enrollment Strategies	30

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Orientation Strategies	36
Strategies for Family Goal-Setting and Planning	42
B. Participation in Head Start	49
Strategies for Supporting the Participation of Parents as Educators, Caregivers, and Nurturers of Their Children	49
Opportunities for Parents to Work With Children at Home	52
Participation in Program Decisions Concerning the Development of Children	56
Meeting the Health and Safety Needs of Children	60
Strategies for Enhancing the Personal Development of Parents	63
Strengthening the Participation of Parents in Decision-Making for Themselves, Their Families, and Their Program	75
Reinforcing and Supporting Decision-Making Responsibilities of the Policy Council and Parent Committees	80
C. Transitioning from Head Start	89
Strategies to Enhance and Strengthen Experiences and Capacities That Parents Will Carry from Head Start	89
Strategies to Help Families Prepare for Actual Leave-Taking	94
CONCLUSION	99
EXHIBITS	
A. Look Inside Head Start—What Do You See?	101
B. Within Head Start Incremental Ladder Toward Economic Independence	113

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INTRODUCTION

AND

**THE HEAD START VISION
FOR PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

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Introduction

Partnership with parents has always been a cornerstone of Head Start. The purpose of A Head Start Handbook of the Parent Involvement Vision and Strategies is to describe a framework for Head Start grantees to think about and carry out their parent involvement mission in a quality manner that meets the Head Start Program Performance Standards and provides the broadest possible opportunity for parent involvement.

Part I of this Handbook, *A Statement of Vision, Values, and Opportunities for Partnering With Parents in Head Start*, discusses each element in the Head Start Vision for Parent Involvement (p. ix) to help programs fulfill that vision. It follows the order in which parents experience Head Start — from recruitment and enrollment, to participation in all aspects of the program, to transition out of the program. Questions are presented for discussion to help Head Start programs think through their response to the Head Start parent involvement mission.

Part II of this Handbook, *Parent Involvement Strategies*, presents a broad variety of strategies that Head Start programs can use in carrying out the Statement of Vision, Values, and Opportunities, discussed in Part I (p. 1). The strategies are organized according to the elements in this Statement and outlined in a step-by-step format. Action steps, activities, and tips for implementation are provided. Each section ends with a list of additional strategies that your Head Start program might explore. The outline format modeled in this Handbook can serve as a guide for your program in developing additional strategies for parent involvement.

How to Use This Handbook

Perhaps the best way to make use of this Handbook is to gather together a group of staff, Policy Council members, and Parent Committee members to work through the Handbook. Review the Head Start Vision for Parent Involvement (on p. ix) and Part I of this Handbook. Which questions address areas of your program that you would like to improve? Which questions appeal to your sense of creativity? In what areas would you like to start trying out some new approaches to parent involvement, or strengthen the approaches you are already using?

When you have identified some key areas, move on to Part II of the Handbook to review the suggested strategies for those issues. Select one or two that you would like to try in your program, or brainstorm some creative ideas of your own.

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You should begin with the first strategy in Part II of the Handbook to get started (see page 19). It is specifically designed to help you think through the Head Start Vision for Parent Involvement and personalize it for your program. *Engaging Parents*, the parent involvement foundation guide in the Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community series, is also a useful resource.



Finally, the term “Policy Council” is used throughout this Handbook to refer to the Head Start program’s top decision-making group. Head Start grantees call this the Policy Council, but delegate agencies call it the Policy Committee. For the purposes of this Handbook, “Policy Council” refers to your program’s decision-making group.

The Head Start Vision for Parent Involvement

To create and sustain a partnership and collaboration with all Head Start parents, with goals to:

- Support parents as primary educators, nurturers, and advocates for their children;
- Provide every parent with opportunities for a significant experience in Head Start; and
- Ensure that parents are involved in making policy and program decisions for their Head Start program.

Each Head Start program should reflect this vision through efforts to carry out the following principles:

- All aspects of the program support the cultures of the families and the community in which the program operates.
- Parents have opportunities for participation and shared decision-making in every area of the program.
- The staff and program meet the expressed interests and needs of each parent, through an ongoing process of personal and family goal-setting and partnering of activities to meet these goals.
- All aspects of the program respond to and support children with disabilities and their families.
- Families build the confidence, skill, and knowledge they need to access community resources on their own behalf.
- Programs make special efforts to reach out to and include fathers, supportive male family members, and male caregivers in their parent involvement activities, especially those activities involving the development of their children.
- Parents, staff, and Policy Council members work together and provide leadership to: strengthen their community; communicate with their communities about the gifts, interests, and needs of Head Start families; and assist in improving existing services or bringing in new services that are needed.